



Donald Liddick. *Eco-Terrorism: Radical Environmental and Animal Liberation Movements*. Westport, Connecticut, Praeger Publishers, 2006. Hardcover \$39.95, pp. 300. ISBN-13: 978-0-27598-535-6

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Since the “eco-terrorism” movement was first identified by the United States government as presenting the ‘number one domestic security threat,’ a number of books and academic articles seeking to address the issue have emerged. Generally these scholarly pieces of work have tended to examine these movements through only their most extreme manifestations (e.g. bomb attacks, large scale arsons), failing to contextualize such incidents within a larger political praxis. Though ample literature discussing the movement’s ideological development, historical roots and tactical overview exist, Donald Liddick’s 2006 book, *Eco-Terrorism: Radical Environmental and Animal Liberation Movements*, is one of the lone examples which aims to develop an *incident-based* picture of the movement. Liddick’s book is broken down into seven distinct units, and while all deserve unique attention, Chapter 6 “Structure and Modus Operandi of Radical Movements,” presents the widest breadth of new contributions to the field.

In this chapter, Liddick utilizes a methodology which aims to describe the larger “eco-terrorist” movement via an incident-based analysis focused on tactics, geographic distribution and group claim. This approach is commendable as previous studies have supplemented such a measured analysis with broad strokes bordering on sensationalism and alarmist rhetoric. The problem present in Liddick’s study, however, is that the author’s dataset is small to the point of limitation, and additionally, his categorical taxonomy is exceedingly inclusive. Liddick’s methodology leads to the determination that “the vast majority of [“eco-terrorist”] crimes...are not properly classified as terrorism” (p. 74). Though Liddick’s findings are not contested, the limitations to this finding require further interrogation.

First, the Liddick dataset contains only 2,836 incidents occurring between 1956 and 2005, amounting to nearly 58 incidents per year. This sampling is exceedingly limiting, when for example, a single group like the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) can claim up to five hundred attacks in a single year. As Liddick’s study includes data from the ALF as well as over 100 additional groups, one is forced to inquire why his annual samples are so small. Liddick’s book reports that the larger “eco-terrorist” movement produces thousands of attacks, yet when those attacks are tallied, the numbers consistently show a propensity for the overrepresentation of the dramatic (e.g. assault, explosives), and a wholesale disregarding of the mundane (e.g. vandalism, sabotage). This patterning begs the question: if this movement is responsible for such a large scale of attacks, why is the study’s dataset based on such a selective pool?

The Liddick dataset is based on “the most readily accessible online sources...[and] Ron Arnold’s 1997 book *Ecoterror*” (p. 72), and although the author states that the dataset is not “exhaustive,” a tacit acknowledgment of this oversight does not equate to a more accurate movement portrayal. Liddick makes it clear that the dataset represents “only a fraction of all animal liberation and radical environmental actions,” but fails to explain why such a selective pool is chosen beyond convenience (p. 73).

Not only is Liddick’s sample small, containing for example, six UK incidents per year, he also fails to separate clandestine, cell-based activities from that of public militant protest and civil disobedience. For example, included in the tactical scope of Liddick’s study is “protesting without a permit,” “hanging banners,” and “staging demonstrations at private homes,” activities which are prevalent but typically excluded from such discussions, as such actions are effectively carried out by identifiably public groups such as Greenpeace, and in the case of home demonstrations, Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC). Because these tactics are employed by membership-based groups, and not ALF-modeled, clandestine cell networks, to include their activities in a combined discussion incorrectly represents distinct tendencies as a singular movement. This mixing of the illegal and legal, clandestine and publicly disruptive, creates a conflation between groups such as the ALF which explicitly do not engage in public events, and those of Greenpeace which engage in disruptive civil disobedience and occasional sabotage. Traditionally, groups such as Greenpeace are excluded from discussions of “eco-terrorism” due to divergent strategy, tactical constraints and the nature of group membership. Liddick’s study attempts to utilize an extremely limited dataset to draw conclusions applicable to diverse strands of the political spectrum that share only a basic motivational base, yet are radically separate in terms of means and goals.

Liddick’s incident-based analysis and quantitative research makes numerous important contributions to the literature of “eco-terrorism”, although it is disappointing in the scope and scale of its inquiry. He also offers a unique and extensive movement history focusing on ideological development and group splintering (Chapters 2-5), as well as ethnographic profiles of individual activists (Chapter 7), that are of value to both academics and practitioners. However, while Liddick’s quantitative research portions represent an attempt to correct the methodological gaps in the wider field’s production of academic literature, much of the book serves as a retelling of the oft-cited history of ideological formulation, movement factionalization and future predictions